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COVERING VIDEO GAMES, ANIMÉ,
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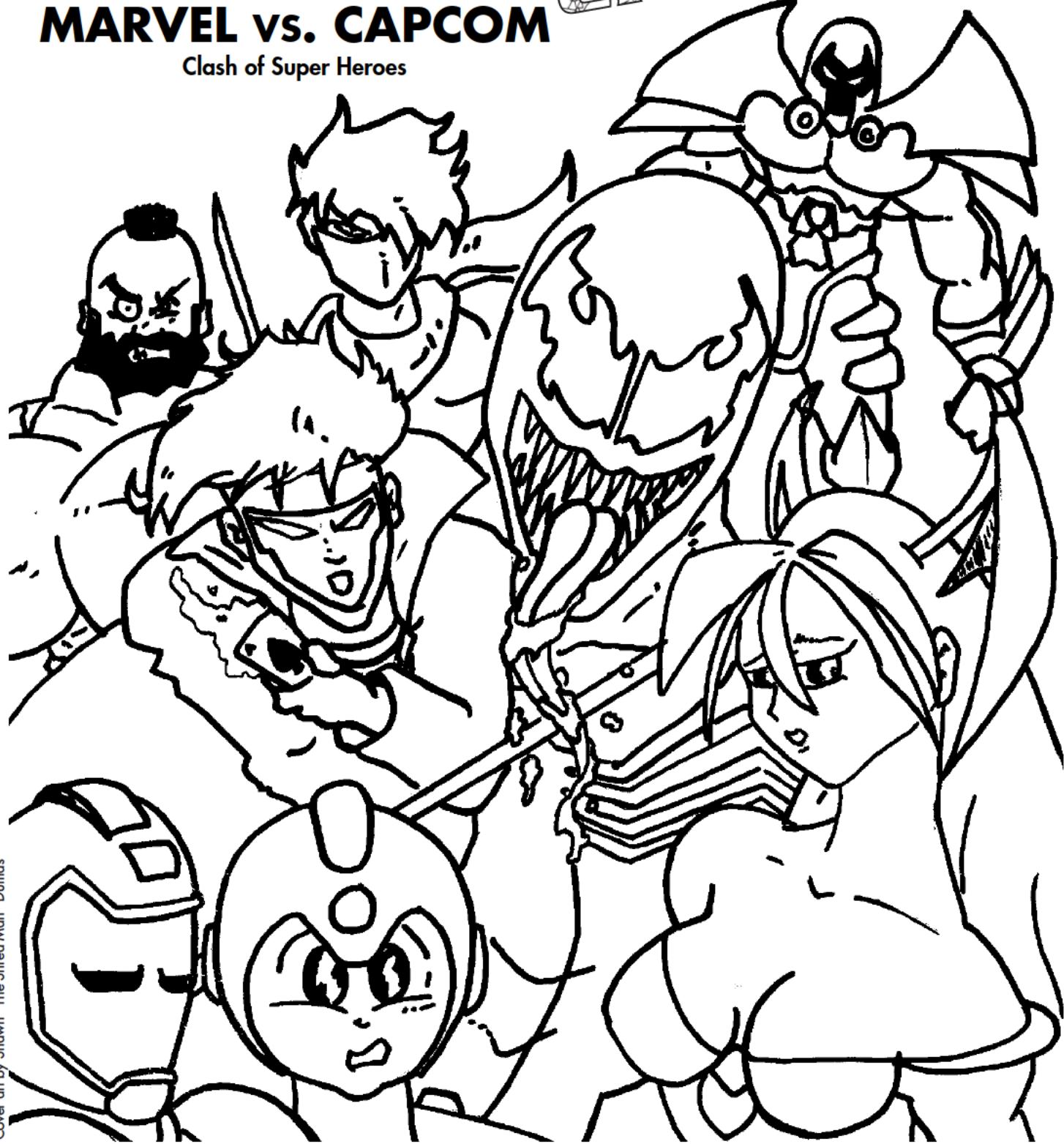
ON SCREEN CHAOS



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MARVEL VS. CAPCOM

Clash of Super Heroes



ON SCREEN CHAOS

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WELCOME!

As I write this month's intro on the day that we're going to press, I'd like to tell you a bit about lead time.

Lead time is that wonderful nebulously space which important stuff always happens, but if we were to rearrange the entire newsletter to accommodate for that important stuff, then we'd never get it done on time.

Magazines and newsletters are almost always out of date when they hit the stands, because lead time makes it impossible to get the very latest information—the stuff that happens between the deadline and the press date.

So lead time explains why this month's banner lists me as OSFF Champ, while we feature an article about Shawn's first successful defense. A couple of weeks after Shawn successfully defended, he lost a Champion's Challenge to me in *Samurai Shodown III*. Nonetheless, it's an outstanding article that will help you understand what makes every OSFF title contest as exciting as it is.

-TONY "XOT" MORSE
On Screen Editor

F-Zero yet to be dethroned as the greatest of all racing games

System: Super NES
Publisher: Nintendo
Release Date: 1991

TONY "XOT" MORSE
On Screen Editor



While doing a little 'modern retrogaming' (hey, the game's almost eight years old), I recently rediscovered the greatest racing game ever. *F-Zero* is a masterpiece for so many reasons. One of the SNES's original three titles, it used the power of the then-brand new system to its full extent to deliver an experience unlike any before.

F-Zero is the first home game to deliver a true forward scrolling playfield. Unlike previous stop-and-go animated racers, where if you accelerate slowly enough you'll suddenly jump forward several feet, *F-Zero* uses the SNES's Mode 7 technology to provide a smoothly advancing playfield that simply scales as you advance towards it. This may not sound like much, but compare the racetrack of *F-Zero* to something like *Pole Position*, and you'll see what I mean.

F-Zero also features wonderfully animated backgrounds. From the waves of the ocean, the sands of the

Xot's

CLASSIC

Perspectives on Retrogaming



Some games are rare for a reason

System: Atari 2600

Publisher: American Video Games

Release Date: 1982

Tax Avoiders tries to take one of everybody's most miserable experiences—tax time—and make it enjoyable. When you consider that this game was designed by a tax attorney, that's not too surprising. But neither is the fact that he failed miserably.

Tax Avoiders follows the general axiom that a game is rare because nobody wanted it. I happened across this game while shopping for SNES games one day in a Toys R Us, and stumbled upon a shelf full of random old 2600 games, and I couldn't resist the title (after all, it was only 99¢, and this was before retrogaming caught on). I took it home, hooked up my trusty old VCS, and was promptly bored out of my skull.

This game obviously was inspired by *Donkey Kong*, with its various levels of platforms connected by elevators and ladders. However, the game, like taxes, has too many complex elements mixed in with poor game play to be of any fun.

Your first screen is the "income" screen, in which you must pick up dollar signs while avoiding red tape. (Red tape is the first of several symbolic items that might be funny to those in the tax industry.) Yet, for some odd reason, all the items are stationary, and therefore, it's exceedingly simple to pick up the money and avoid the red tape; you don't have to jump over it, simply jumping through it will suffice.

As time goes by, you will enter the "tax shelter investment" screen. The basic concept is something like, grab the investment, place it in your portfolio, repeat. Constantly running around is a little guy in a trench coat, who, depending on his color, will either audit you and take your cash, take \$1,000 and give you a better investment, or give you the best investment possible for free. Each investment is represented by a symbol corresponding with the 'industry' associated with it: a flask for research & development, a TV set for the video game

Continued on Page 5

Continued on Page 8

Marvel vs. Capcom: best versus game yet

THE GAME

Continuing the tradition of *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* and the lesser known (probably because it was distributed to fewer arcades) *Marvel Super Heroes vs. Street Fighter*, comes *Marvel vs. Capcom*, Capcom's latest addition to its two-on-two team fighting games.

Marvel vs. Capcom has fifteen immediately playable characters (eight from the Capcom side, and seven from the Marvel universe), and six hidden characters that can be unlocked through elaborate codes. The game plays a lot like the two previous versus games: you choose two different characters for your team and can switch between them at any point in the game. When a character is inactive (off-screen), he or she can recover some of the damage taken previously. You can also use your inactive character to perform counter strikes (requiring a level of super energy) or team supers, where you both do a super move at the same time (requiring two levels of super energy).

Two new features were added to the game to make it different from its predecessors. First off, at the beginning of each fight a five-by-four grid of characters flashes by the screen. You press a button to stop the moving cursor on a character, and that character will become your "special helper" for the next fight. A special helper can be summoned at any point by pressing Medium Punch and Medium Kick, and they will show up, perform a special move, and leave—unless they are hit before completing the move.

Depending on how useful your character is, you can summon them from three to nine times over the course of the fight. Someone like Colossus, who dashes across the screen and hits multiple times, you can summon less frequently than a person like Arthur, who shows up and slowly tosses three javelins at your opponent.

The other new feature is a new form of team mode, which also requires two levels of super meter. During

this one, though, both characters stay on the screen at the same time for about seven seconds, and you can do endless super moves during this time. The downside is that *both* characters can be hit with attacks during this time, and it's generally easy to minimize damage simply by blocking for all seven seconds. But it's impressive to watch, especially when both players set up this move at the same time and fireballs are flying all over the place.

Although there is only one "true" Shotokan character (Ryu), a respectable number of the characters end up falling into the fireball/uppercut category. However, they've done their best to make sure that people who learned how to fight with the Spinning Pile Driver motion or charging motions still have players that they can use as well. We'll go into more detail on the characters later.

The final boss, Onslaught, can be extremely difficult to defeat, because he has two forms that you must be able to overcome without gaining any life back in between. His first form plays like a powered up version of Magneto for the most part, although he does have odd moves like Juggernaut's Headcrush and a super Shinkuu Hadoken, as well as attacks like the Magnetic Tempest and Hypergrab. His second form is a lot like Apocalypse from XvSS in general shape, except it can fly all around—and off—the screen. Blasts from either of Onslaught's forms can easily take off a quarter of your life or more, so good defense is a must.

All in all, though, *Marvel vs. Capcom* is a fun fighting game that has certain features no console system right now could emulate very well. (The new team mode in particular.) So we've thrown our fair share of quarters into it, and although the balance between characters is found wanting, there is still nobody in the game that is completely useless. (Although a few, like War Machine, come close...)

The entire On Screen staff contributed to this article.

THE PLAYERS

Here are the On Screen crew's evaluations of the fifteen base characters in *Marvel vs. Capcom*. Logically, we tended to focus more on the new or significantly changed characters.

TEAM CAPCOM

Captain Commando used to be the mascot for Capcom's line of 8-bit NES titles. His only game role was in a four player simultaneous Final Fight type game called, not too surprisingly, *Captain Commando*. He's a very effective character in the game. His fireball is a flamethrower burst that extends across the entire screen, and he also has a Thunder Strike where he punches the ground with his fist and an electric wave strikes up to the top of the screen. It's a great air defense and does heavy damage if it connects.

Mega Man is a great beginner's character, because he has the ability to shoot projectiles just with the press of a button (Fierce Punch), no motions necessary. You can also charge the Mega Buster shot by holding the button down—shots can go up to at least 12 hits! Mega Man also has the ability to gain different weapons from his other adventures, the



Leaf Shield and Tornado Hold, by calling Flip-Top down to give him a power-up. Mega Man has several odd and cutesy supers, (one calls down a barrage of Mets), but his most effective is simply called "Hyper Megaman," where he becomes Mega Man X and attacks with a blast similar to Cyclops' old Optic Blast super. Since Mega Man is smaller than all the other characters, he cannot crouch. But on the other hand, he doesn't need to worry about crouch-blocking attacks either.

Morrigan plays much like she did in the *Darkstalkers* series, but has had the speed of her attacks tweaked to change her chain combos (you can't link a four-hit roundhouse into anything anymore, it seems). She has also been given a couple of new supers. With one of them, she whips out this weird spinning cannon and fires an extended blast much like the Shinkuu Hadoken. Her other one requires three levels of super, and while doing it she throws a heart at her opponent. If it connects, a pink lace curtain covers the screen and you see outline flashes of her and her target in ... interesting positions. (No, nothing that risque!) The name of this super is, appropriately enough, the "Eternal Slumber."





Back from his arcade game from almost ten years ago, **Strider** leaves the scrolling adventure genre and enters into the one-on-one fighting world. You don't need to know much about his special moves, because his normal attacks (most of which involve using his sword-like weapon, the Cypher) have incredible priority and range, and can be chained together for high combos similar to Wolverine's attack style. He has a fairly unique super as well, in which two protective droids (powerups he could get from his arcade game) surround him and fire out energy blasts in sync with Strider's regular attacks. The droids last for about ten seconds, and the blasts do tick damage. For a character with such strong regular strikes, this move is very useful, because you can do all your normal and special attacks while the droids are active—you just can't do any other super moves or gain any super meter.

Ryu can almost be considered three characters. In a desperate attempt to stop the pure shotokan teams, Capcom has blended Ryu, Ken and Akuma into a single character. You start off with Ryu and his moves, but at the cost of a level of super meter, you can switch the color of your gi, which will activate either Ken or Akuma's normal, special, and super moves. It's a neat concept, but not too much has changed. And Ryu can perform some new supers from Street Fighter III.



Ah, how the mighty have fallen. **Zangief** is pitifully weak in this version. Let's face it—he lives and dies by the force of his Spinning Pile Driver, and it simply doesn't do enough damage in this game, nor does his Final Atomic Buster. He does have a neat team super where both characters run in from opposite directions to try a dual FAB. His new super, the "Iron Body," is rather intimidating. He turns into this dark grey form of himself and seems to be *impossible* to knock over. However, he cannot block attacks while like this, and while he takes less damage from all strikes, super projectiles can wear him down in a hurry.

There isn't really much to say about **Chun Li** this time around. About all that's new is her new air super in which she flies up with a kick that causes Chinese characters to slowly appear all around the screen if it connects. The screen then fades out to white, and the target takes damage. Think of it as an aerial version of Akuma's Raging Demon.



The bizarre, yet inexplicably cool **Jin** apparently came from the Cyberbots fighting game. Many of his supers involve his Cyberbot attacking from off the screen (either with a giant fist or a barrage of gunfire). His regular moves are equally bizarre and are hard to follow at times, but he seems to have low priority with his attacks. When Jin drops to less than about twenty percent health, a sort of "auto super" kicks in where he starts to glow gold. It's not clear if he takes less damage in this state or does more or what, but it lasts until he is defeated. One could almost call him the "Dan" of the game, which certainly explains Xot's sudden interest in him.

TEAM MARVEL



Captain America seems to be able to do a super version of most of his special moves. His Charging Star super is the one used most frequently, and it hits about ten times if it connects. Seems a lot more useful than his Final Justice super, which he still has as well. His Final Justice super is essentially unchanged, and he also has a super version of his uppercut which attacks a lot like a Shoryureppa—the same way his uppercut worked with the Power Gem in *Marvel Super Heroes*.



There are only two supers for **Gambit**—his old "Royal Flush" and a new one where he jumps onto one corner of the screen and drops a card that detonates into an explosion that crosses the screen similar to the Magnetic Shockwave of Magneto. There aren't any new moves for him, but the lag time after a Royal Flush is no longer to the degree that you'll automatically be hit when you mistime one. Otherwise, he is more or less unchanged from his *X-Men vs. SF* incarnation.



The Incredible Hulk is as sluggish as he ever was. He has three different supers—a super version of his "earth rip" attack, a "stone rain" where rocks fall from the sky in a pattern almost identical to the Iceman Helper attack, and his old Gamma Crush from *Marvel Super Heroes*. His twirl and hurl throw (half-circle back, any punch), while it doesn't do SPD-level pain, is still rather effective.

Even old **Spider-Man** has joined the three supers club. He has Maximum Spider, and his new ones are a weird "spider crawl" where he runs towards you on the

Continued on Page 7



Svenyip's brief synopsis of Marvel vs. Capcom's hidden characters

Roll: From the Mega Man universe, Roll plays a lot like Mega Man. She needs a quarter circle to shoot the Mega Buster and has a weird "flower toss" attack, but most of her moves and supers are similar. She's a weaker character overall than Mega Man, but her advantage is that she's even smaller, and a hard target to hit and combo.

Lilith: From the Darkstalkers universe, Lilith is Morrigan's younger sister. She doesn't play like she does in *Vampire Savior*, but plays much like Morrigan with a few tweaked special and super moves. She has a different fireball attack and super fireball, and she lacks the Eternal Slumber, for example.

Shadow Lady (Mechanical Chun-Li): I've never seen her, but people say she has a lot of weird attacks, including a super where she does the Kikoken animation and fires about fifteen missiles at her opponent. In addition, she blows up like a robot

when she is defeated.

Red Venom (Carnage): People call him Carnage, but he looks like Venom, I think it shows his name as Venom, and he forms from Eddie Brock. He's a faster Venom with some different regular attacks, but he has worse armor so takes more damage.

Orange Hulk: Much like the Red Venom, he's a faster character, but his moves do less damage and he takes more from hits. He lacks the partial "super armor" which let the normal Hulk be a little more resistant to being knocked down.

Gold War Machine (Iron Man): The Gold War Machine looks a lot like Iron Man, but has the same flaws as the normal War Machine. In addition, he has permanent super armor but cannot block. So he takes less damage and is hard to knock over, but will have to eat every projectile you throw at him unless he can get out of the way.

Ultimately, *Marmalade Boy* just a soap opera

Series: *Marmalade Boy*

Number of Episodes: 76

Fansubber: *Tomadachi Animé*

MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE

On Screen Correspondent

Marmalade Boy is one of those series that I'm almost embarrassed to say that I've watched, much less own the entire collection. But after getting about a dozen episodes into the series, I was hooked and had to see the entire collection, if only to know how it would all turn out and who would end up with who in the end.

Marmalade Boy is a soap opera, plain and simple. Well, actually, there's nothing simple about it at all. The world centers around one Miki Koshikawa, a high school student whose life was more or less normal. Until the day that her parents went off on a trip, met a different set of parents, decided that they were more compatible with the others' significant other, and decided to switch partners, get remarried, and all six of them (including the other family's son, Yuu) would live together in the same house.

If this entire concept throws you for a loop, don't worry about it, because it really doesn't affect the storyline all that often. It's just a convenient plot device to force Miki and Yuu to be close to each other and keep Miki questioning who she really loves—whether it's Ginta, her old love that rejected her a couple years back but is suddenly coming on strong, or Yuu, the mysterious unknown person that she finds strangely appealing.

Modern racing titles don't measure up to seven year-old SNES gem

Continued from Page 2

desert shifting in the winds, or the hundreds of tiny vehicles rushing thousands of feet below you, the sparkling cityscapes really provide a futuristic atmosphere.

Before I get ahead of myself, I want to reiterate that I think *F-Zero* is the greatest racing game ever made. There are certain things that more modern games just don't have, and I'm about to get into two of them.

First, *F-Zero* has fifteen different tracks. Nowadays, you're often lucky to get eight or ten. Fifteen tracks is a lot of racing! And each five-track circuit features three difficulty levels which turn some of those mild-mannered drones into viciously aggressive Boston drivers. True, most of the tracks are repeated, but they always feature a modified map and new obstacles to keep you guessing.

Those obstacles also keep this game interesting. Not only have you got to memorize the tracks (and believe me, you do!) but you also need to learn the best place to employ speed boosts and which obstacles to lean into and which to avoid completely. A favorite strategy of mine is, rather than slow down for a curve to avoid the guardrails, slam into them at full speed and ricochet off. Learn to play the angles properly and you'll keep your speed up and only take a minimal amount of damage.

Secondly, for each unique track, there's a separate background tune. A lot of your basic racers just don't

Apart from a few other main characters at the start of the series, most characters that will become regulars later on will enter into the show innocently enough, but will then fall for Yuu or Miki and will make their lives difficult as yet another love triangle is added into the equation. You can generally rely on the fact that once things seem to be going well for everybody, another triangle is about to unfold.



While I'm glad I got all of *Marmalade Boy* just so I could see the end, I don't really think it's a series that I'll watch again in the near future, if ever. It might be a good one to invest in if you have some friends who will each order a few tapes (there are 19 tapes in all). There are series out there that are more practical to own than *Marmalade Boy*s.

Marmalade Boy was the first major fansubbing endeavor done by *Tomadachi Animé*, and it has their high-quality, easy to read, easy to understand style that they've become famous for in my eyes. However, they personally no longer distribute the tapes because they're busy distributing some of their newer works. Many different fansub distributors have copies of the tapes, though. I recommend ChiAnime again (since so much of my recent anime was acquired from ChiAnime, you'll see that I recommend them quite frequently). At their prices, the entire series costs about \$95, which isn't too bad at all.

Overall Rating: **8/10.** (It's a well-done anime, but there's really no reread value to it. Once you know that X is going to leave Y for Z, would you really want to see it a second time?)

bother with this anymore, and *F-Zero* features a fine soundtrack indeed, rivaling the music on more than a couple 32-bit console games.

Mixed in with what could have been an excellent, basic racing simulator are the high-tech hovercraft type vehicles. You don't race a car, you race a machine. This takes away some of that boring old realism that we all have to deal with for about 18 hours a day. These machines aren't indestructible, either, as you can fly off the track to your death. Just repeatedly taking hits from the guardrails or your opponents can also be enough to reduce you to a smoldering pile of rubble—literally. I found this to be an extra little bit of humiliation, as the camera scrolls around to show the wreckage of your vehicle, a pillar of black smoke swirling towards the skies, with the blunt yet appropriate "YOU LOST" in the center of the screen.

Nintendo has been teasing us with the idea of a sequel for years, and nothing ever became of it. Their closest effort, *Wave Race 64*, just doesn't have the same 'wow' kind of feel that *F-Zero* has always had for me. *F-Zero* is a perfect example of how a relatively simple concept can be turned into a gem of a game if the programmers just give it a little extra effort. Modern game designers, please take note.

Author's note: In case you're wondering, I really do believe this is the best racing game I've ever played. To give you a better idea of my taste in racers, my other favorites would probably have to be *Jet Moto* and *Wipeout*.

Atari Collection 2 another incredible disc

System: Sony Playstation
Publisher: Midway
Developer: Digital Eclipse
Release Date: April, 1998

TONY "XOT" MORSE On Screen Editor

The long awaited fourth volume in the Williams/Midway Arcade's *Greatest Hits* series has finally arrived. *Arcade's Greatest Hits: The Atari Collection 2* features six of Atari's later hits in another outstanding package of entertaining emulation.

Like the first Atari collection, *TAC2* features six games, a 3-d rendered introductory movie, and several pieces of video game memorabilia from original development sketches to photos of the original arcade cabinets. As a plus, you can now zoom in on most of the gallery pics, allowing you to actually read the original ad slicks and newsletters once distributed by Atari. Unlike the first disc, though, there are no full-motion interviews with any of the programmers.

TAC2 also allows for a greater range of options, including support for analog and driving controllers, as well as the Playstation mouse. A great new feature is the ability to alter (in applicable games) the sensitivity settings that simulate analog controls from a digital controller. This lets you play with the responsiveness of the controller so that it feels more like a trackball or steering wheel—*to your liking*. Analog simulation seems to be done better as well, as I found the steering simulation in both *Road Blasters* and *Paperboy* to be outstanding; with a bit of tweaking, they responded beautifully.

This disc hits big with a superb selection of titles as well. Unlike the Namco collections, there are no little-known, lackluster 'filler' games here. The six titles chose this time around are:

Road Blasters. A shooter mixed together with a racing title to make an excellent action packed game. Unlike a lot of shooters, *Road Blasters* actually encourages accuracy, with each consecutive hit increasing your score multiplier, while misses drop the counter down. The emulation is superb, complete with music, slightly muffled voices, and the Road Blasters T-Shirt Giveaway. This is one of those games that they never made a good port of, and now we've got a perfect one.

Crystal Castles. One of my all time favorite games, *Crystal Castles* is the story of Bentley Bear's quest to harvest the magical gems that grow in the Crystal Castles. Along the way he will face nasty trees, gem eaters and Berthilda the witch.

One of the first 3-D-ish video games, *Crystal Castles* has outstanding graphics and beautifully rendered backgrounds. Yet, there's a couple of spots here where the emulation breaks down. The music is superb, but it sounds like the tunes were sampled rather than emulated. Plus, there's a microsecond or so of slowdown between levels—a telltale sign of load time—where the music also slows down. This doesn't take away from the playability of the game, though.

The same cannot be said for the controls, though.

Crystal Castles was always meant to be played with a trackball, and the odd angles and construction of the mazes make playing this game with a control pad nearly impossible. The mouse helps tremendously, but the need for a Playstation trackball controller has never been more apparent.

Not so for **Millipede**, another of the mouse compatible titles. Another perfect translation, *Millipede* brings everything I loved about the arcade game home. The sequel to *Centipede* adds growing and changing mushroom fields, a pseudo-scrolling playing area, and swarm waves, as well as several new bugs and DDT bombs. Play control is superb with either the mouse or control pad, and everything I remember about the game is completely intact. The only drawback here is that the original arcade game used a vertical monitor, and as such, the top line of the screen doesn't fit on a standard television.

The last of the trackball games, **Marble Madness** is a race against the clock to maneuver a marble through a three-dimensional maze. Your enemies here include the infamous Black Ball, puddles of acid, glass-shattering hammers, and Marble Eaters, complete with lips to smack and tongues to lick them with.

To compensate for the lack of a speed-sensitive trackball, which is so very vital to this game, when playing with the control pad you are given a 'turbo' button, which will simulate the effect of rapidly spinning the trackball. This feature works pretty well, except when you're stuck at the base of a steep ramp; the turbo still isn't enough.

The mouse controller solves this problem, but creates another: running out of room. You just can't avoid having to re-center the mouse on its mouse pad every few seconds, and this causes you to lose momentum. A five-foot square mouse pad is my next project, after my letter writing campaign to get Sony to design a Playstation trackball.

Paperboy has never been a favorite of mine, but nonetheless, it is faithfully reproduced here, with all the cheesy catch phrases that annoyed me so many years ago. The concept (only God knows how this got out of the idea stage) is to have a paper route, with the added bonus of trashing the houses of non-subscribers. Unfortunately, your paperboy sucks at bike riding, as a collision with anything will cost you your life. Nonetheless, there's nothing missing that I remember, and the ability to use a driving controller to simulate handlebars is a nice addition.

And then there's **Gauntlet**, the granddaddy of the maze games. With over 100 rooms, there's plenty of medieval madness to keep you going for a while here, and to make it the ultimate party game, *Gauntlet* supports the Multi-Tap for up to four players. But if you don't have any friends, *TAC2* includes both the two- and four-player versions of the *Gauntlet* ROMs, so you can choose your character if you don't have all four players joining in. (Four-player arcade machines had each coin slot and joystick locked to a specific character.)

Gauntlet does appear to lack a couple of things, though. It may be my admittedly bad memory confusing

Continued on Page 8

Marvel vs. Capcom's mix of new, revamped, and classic characters



Continued from Page 4

ground and hits about twelve times if it isn't blocked, and a web attack where he flies up to the corner and shoots out a triangle-shaped web blast towards the ground that reaches about one-half of the screen. If this hits, you are drawn into an auto-throw combo and lose a healthy 40% of your life bar.



Venom is deceptively quick with some of his moves. Until you've fought against him a few times, you'll have difficulty countering his odd moves and supers. His Venom Web is particularly nasty, because he jumps up, fires a web around most of the screen, and unless you're blocking, you'll be caught and get smacked around by an automatic combo.



War Machine has everything that Iron Man did from *Marvel Super Heroes*, except all of it is worse. There's more of a lag time on the Unibeam, and it's a thinner beam that can be ducked. The Repulsor Blast just seems very ineffective now, and the Proton Cannon is *ridiculously* slow. At least he has a new super-

a barrage of missiles fly up into the air and land close to where War Machine was standing. Sort of an anti-air defense. Not much use for it, but it fits right in with him in being useless.

Finally, **Wolverine** feels a lot like his earlier incarnations. He seems to be a tad quicker, but his priority, while still very high, isn't as godlike as it was back in *X-Men*. Again, there's not much new here, either.



Shred Man successfully retains the gold

A champion's perspective on his first OSFF title defense

Well, I knew it was coming. Xot had made it known that he was going to try to take the On Screen Fighting Federation title from me seconds after I won it. And on April 4, he made it official.

It had not been a good week for yours truly. I'd been fighting a wicked head cold and working extra hours and was just plain miserable. Then, I was faced with the possibility of giving up my title just a couple of weeks after winning it.

The list of games I was presented with only filled me with dread:

Virtua Fighter Kids. The epitome of things I hate in fighting games. I absolutely despise *Virtua Fighter*. Needless to say, I'd never played the game and had no chance. *Mortal Kombat II*. Ugh. Xot's best game in the tournament, and another that's low on my list. Then, the shining star— the original *Street Fighter III*! A game I actually knew how to play! Suddenly, there was hope...

The night arrived. I went to Xot's abode, a half hour drive for me, straight out of work. I was starving and brought pizza. And with food cooking and the promise animé later, it was a bit hard to concentrate. But, I looked down at that belt I made, the one I'd taken from the "unbeatable" Nealie, and was determined to keep it. The nWo will prevail tonight, I thought...

The Strategy: I knew I only had to win in one game to retain, and I knew *SF2* was my best shot. I had to save it for last, because if I blew it early, I would play that much worse in the other games. I decided to take *VF Kids* out first.

It was obvious I had no clue. I asked Xot what the buttons were and who would be a good character to use. Armed with Jacky and a basic remedial bit of knowledge, I proceeded. Then, an incredible thing happened. I'd won the first fight! By sheer dumb luck, I'd won. A rush of excitement came over me. If I win one more match of this, I can keep my belt on sheer, stupid, blind, clueless, doo-dah luck.

The frustration Xot felt was overwhelmingly obvious. I had just decisively destroyed him in a game I never played. And he wasn't about to let it happen again. Switching to Jacky himself, we then had three real close rounds, but dumb luck failed and Xot tied. In the third match it was again close, but Xot proved that skill usually overcomes luck, and my excitement left me.

I was really hungry, food smelled good, and I was about to play *MK2*. I was unenthused, I'd forgotten so much of this game, and worst of all, Xot was getting really cocky. He even random selected his first fighter. (A mistake, as he ended up with Cage.) I really don't remember much about that joke of a matchup, except I played Sub-Zero in one of the rounds, and badly. I was wrecked, plain and simple.

On to *SF2*. It was clear we both hadn't played in a while and had to get used to the physics of the games, including no air blocking, or alpha counters, etc., etc.

Match one: Xot took his old favorite, Chun Li. Man, I can still remember going to Papa Gino's and watching Xot play Chun Li... the memories... then I remembered something else: Guile is a god in this game! In two straight rounds, I'd handily dispatched him.

Match two: Xot decided to switch to Ken, while I stayed with Guile. It was during this match that I learned there was no air blocking, as I landed poorly on a couple of fireballs. Xot took the victory, but I put on a good show.

This was it. Third match. Whoever won this one was the champ. Xot turned to Ryu, whether for variety or whatever reason. I couldn't resist. I took Ken.

I don't remember where it was, but in some magazine somewhere there's a picture of Ken vs. Ryu with the caption, "Ken vs. Ryu: A classic matchup." Since seeing that pic, we have jokingly quoted the caption every time we had that match. But, I can say without contradiction that the caption was never more true than in our matchup.

Round one was grueling. As per regulations, the timer was shut off, and it was a good thing as these rounds would've far exceeded the time limit. Despite someone walking in front of the screen, causing me to scream "Interference!" in sheer frustration, I'd managed to win the round, but with no visible vitality left.

The second round was even more grueling and lasted for what seemed like hours. In fact, when Xot barely squeezed out a victory, I fell to the floor, exhausted, truly believing that I'd lost the title. Then I heard Xot's voice: "There's still one more round, dude."

Then another voice. It was absolutely perfectly clear in the back of my mind, that's how into the fight I was: "RESURRECTION."

This was it. Round 3 was as grueling as the past two; even more so. Each of us wincing as we took a hit, cursing as we whiffed a move or took a fireball in the face. It was a great fight, and whoever won this one truly deserved to be the champion.

It came down to the nitty-gritty. Both of us had mere slivers of power. Whoever took the next hit would lose the gold. My heart was beating like crazy, and then it happened. The opportunity I waited for, the flaw in an otherwise perfect match that, if I could take advantage of, would bring me victory.

Xot had jumped right over me. There it was, a Ryu airborne, with no fist sticking out, no foot ready to strike; whatever he planned to do when he landed, he was helpless for that fraction of a second. Quickly I inputted my forward, down, down-forward and prayed to the great Street Fighter gods that this move would come out. Releasing the punch button, I had committed myself to my destiny.

"*Shoryuken!*" *smack*

The belt was mine.

N64 finally gets a decent fighter

Ocean brings above-average one-on-one combat action to cartridge fans



System: Nintendo 64

Publisher: Ocean

Release Date: January 26, 1998

MICHAEL "SVENYIP" TROUPE
On Screen Correspondent

As I'm really the only one of us that has easy access to all the new N64 games (due to the rental store I work at and manage), I guess I should be writing reviews or summaries of some of the newer titles. Remember, however, that I am biased against the Nintendo 64. Take everything I say with a grain of salt.

The Nintendo 64 has been plagued with bad fighting games, or good translations of fighting games that most people didn't really care about. Things like *Mortal Kombat Trilogy*, *Killer Instinct Gold*, and *Mace: The Dark Age* were done rather well, but they still couldn't stand up to games like *Street Fighter*, *Tekken*, or *Virtua Fighter*. Other games made specifically for the N64—*Clay Fighter 63 1/3* and *Dark Rift*—were uninspiring to say the least.

Now *Fighter's Destiny* has arrived, and while it's not an earthshaking fighter, at least it's better than any of

its on-system competition. Graphically, it's a well-drawn three dimensional fighter. All of the characters are built off of the same basic body shape, so there's a certain feel of "MK Ninja Clones" at times, but they do a good job of making them look different in the fights themselves.

The point system is odd. Each fight is determined by a "best of 7" score. Winning by knocking the opponent out of the ring or by judges' decision is worth one point. Winning by a throw (successfully completing a throw without it being reversed or blocked is an automatic win) or hold (locking your opponent up and draining the last of their energy) is worth two points. Winning by a counter (specific moves, if timed just right, can counter specific attacks) or knockdown (some slow moves can cause an instant knockdown, or hitting an opponent who's out of energy knocks them down) gets three points, and a special (a specific "finishing" move on an opponent out of energy), gets the most points, four.

While this is an interesting system, it results in a lot of "chicken" fights. If a player is almost out of energy, they can intentionally ring themselves out and end up with a lesser penalty than if they lost the fight fairly. Fortunately, the game gives you the option to change any of the values for victories, so you can raise the ring out victories to five points if you want to force players to want to fight to the bitter

end.

There are also a good number of secrets hidden in the game. Each of the fighters has eight special techniques that are unavailable at first, even if you know the motion. To get them, you must fight in the Masters' Challenge, a battle involving eight Masters and four (incredibly hard to defeat) Jokers. You fight your opponents randomly, although good reflexes will help you to stop the "random" wheel close to where you want it to go. Beat a Master, gain one technique. Beat a Joker, you can continue trying for techniques. Lose against a Master, you can try a different fight. But lose against a Joker, and the battle is over and you lose *all* your acquired techniques. So it turns into a "how long are you willing to risk?" sort of game.

There are also a few hidden characters in the game, one of which is why I played the game for so long. For the first time in any game that I know of, you get to fight against a bipedal cow. To understand why I think that's important, you'd have to know me. But there's something *really* scary about fighting against an opponent whose udder flaps every which way as it performs the "forbidden dance" after defeating you.

All in all, *Fighter's Destiny* provided a few hours of enjoyment for me. It's worth a rental, at least, and if you can find a friend who also likes the game, it's complex enough to be a keeper.

Second Atari collection also superb

Continued from Page 6

it with *Gauntlet II*, but I could have sworn there was a bit more voice in this title. And sometimes, there's a longer delay between the name of the character and the voice file (kind of like: "Warrior (wait two seconds), shot the food," or whatever else. And the sound effect for picking up a key sometimes doesn't play.

But add in the unlimited continue potential of free play and a high score table calculated by the average number of coins used, and you end up faced with the dilemma of having to play for distance or for score. It helps keep the game interesting after you play the ten-hour marathon to see all 100 levels.

Overall, though, the minor omissions are more than made up for by the plethora of options. This is quite possibly the best collection CD yet, with unquestionably the best selection of games. There's not too many great Atari arcade games left to put on a third collection CD, but I'm hoping for *Asteroids Deluxe* and *Off the Wall*.

Tax Avoiders simply a bad game!

Continued from Page 2

industry, a sun for solar energy, and so on. I can't imagine trying to figure all this out without the manual.

Of course, this section is based on the stock market, so even if you play the game absolutely perfectly, you can still lose, because there's a 50% chance that any investment you pick up will *lose* money, rather than make it. This screen, too, is boring and repetitive, because your movement rate is significantly faster than your lone pursuer. This makes it exceedingly easy to catch him when you need to, and avoid him when you don't.

The ultimate goal of the game is to earn one million dollars in a one-year period, but I haven't been able to stomach this game long enough to work out an effective capital gains strategy. The graphics and sound are quite good, by 2600 standards, but the game play is simply inane. I'm just glad that I didn't spend a lot of time looking for this one, because this game is so bad that it would completely kill the thrill of finding a rare title in the wild.